

**Evaluation Form Comments and Responses from:
IDENTIFICATION AND ECOLOGY OF
SENSITIVE AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES OF
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

**MAY 8-10, 2003
RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA**

Total registered = 163

Total evaluations received = 12 (7%)

Ratings from 1 to 5; 5 being highest; 1 being lowest.

To what extent were your personal/professional objectives satisfied?

Scores: 5=2 (17%), 4=6 (50%), 3=3 (25%), 2=1 (8%), 1=0

Comments:

This was a very informative workshop. The speakers were knowledgeable and the material was comprehensive. TWS needs to offer more field ID and survey courses/opportunities!!!

I had hoped there would be more information/handouts on survey techniques and ID of species.

I would have appreciated all discussions to include survey methods and ways to mitigate for the species.

I would like to see more identification handouts/talks. Handouts for each talk would be better.

Some speakers would do well to narrow their visual media/content so as to leave time for questions, more depth in the most important issues-less detail.

Not enough written material.

First day was weak as far as the number of speakers. I came for info on invasives and management of invasives and that speaker cancelled.

TWS-WS Response:

Thank you to those who mentioned that they would like to have more talks on survey and identification techniques. We will consider this for our next workshop. As for the speaker who cancelled, an unfortunate personal health issue arose for him at the last minute. Luckily, two of the leading experts in the field stepped up and covered his topic. Even though it was last-minute, we felt that they gave a good overview on invasive species in the area. Again, the primary purpose of this workshop was to provide information regarding ecology and identification of sensitive, native species. The invasives talk was meant to provide an overview of local issues, as opposed to detailed information about each invasive species. We suggest you attend our symposium in October that will focus solely on introduced species in California. Check our website for additional details.

To what extent did the environment contribute to the learning experience?

Scores: 5=4 (33%), 4=5 (42%), 3=3 (25%), 2=0, 1=0

Comments:

Friendly environment; questions welcomed.

Everyone was very friendly and encouraged questions.

In-house live specimens or field trip to a museum or collection would be nice.

Great location.

Great snacks provided!

The conference room was not near other meetings, so there were no distractions from other nearby meeting rooms. (Also, good snacks!)

Comfortable; facilitator did an excellent job!

Screen wasn't big enough or bright enough for attendees in the back.

Nice room and service.

TWS-WS Response:

Most of you found that the environment positively contributed to your learning experience. As for live specimens and a museum trip, we had planned on having both of these at the workshop; however, for various reasons, this did not materialize. People who were interested in taking the lead on these items weren't able to attend. As for the projection screen not being big or bright enough for those in the back of the room, almost the entire first row at the workshop was empty. Anyone not able to see clearly could have moved to the front of the room with no problem. The reality is that viewing from some seats at all workshops will be more difficult than from others; we suggest that you arrive early and choose a seat that meets your needs at future workshops.

To what extent did the written materials contribute to the learning experience?

Scores: 5=0, 4=3 (25%), 3=4 (33%), 2=4 (33%), 1=1 (8%)

Comments:

Inclusion of outlines of each talk and a representative literature list for each talk should be mandatory (personally, I'd like as much written material as possible).

I really had hoped for more content re ID and survey techniques.

More outlines would have been good.

Some speakers had support materials that were very helpful. Some speakers had no support materials. It would be helpful to have printouts of the PowerPoint slides or an outline from all speakers.

Not all talks made written material available. There was a lot of information given (i.e., scientific names and distribution maps) that was hard to get down into notes.

Need to provide copies of all presentations w/pictures prior to talks.

I would have liked handouts of all presentations, not just some.

I am happy that most speakers contributed materials-in contrast to those at the southern Sierra herps workshop.

The written materials were often lacking; this could be better organized.

Lack of presenters' written material is a big letdown. I have more species info in my Stebbins reference. I was hoping to take home more written information on the species presented.

Not enough written materials; many species with no written material. Most written material does not include range maps!

Adequate but somewhat difficult to navigate.

TWS-WS Response:

With the exception of one comment about survey and ID techniques, which is addressed above under the first question, all comments addressed the lack of written materials. We apologize for the lack of copies of speaker presentations; however, as we mentioned over the course of the workshop, we asked all speakers (several times) to provide written materials in the form of either outlines of their talks, a copy of their PowerPoint presentations, copies of maps, etc., and received only what you were given by the time the workshop began. We agree with you that it is important and beneficial to provide you with written materials; however, as with last-minute cancellations, we have little control over who does and does not provide them in advance. We also remind you that each of the speakers volunteered his or her time to present information at the workshop. We did not advertise or promise any written materials from this workshop because we knew that the information provided from speakers would be on a volunteer basis. As stated at the beginning of the workshop, the purpose of the binders was to give participants a "head start" on organizing their notes.

To what extent were the objectives stated in the promotional literature or those stated at the beginning of the workshop satisfied?

Scores: 5=2 (17%), 4=8 (67%), 3=0, 2=2 (17%), 1=0

Comments:

Okay.

Need to focus on identification.

Not much stated (?)

The talks were good but the lack of written material reduced the extent to which the objectives were satisfied.

TWS-WS Response:

See responses to comments above.

To what extent did the workshop contain significant and current intellectual or practical

information? (11 responded to this question)

Scores: 5=4 (36%), 4=5 (46%), 3=0, 2=2 (18%), 1=0

Comments:

Speakers were excellent. Well-known experts!

Valuable information from those who know.

Slides and PowerPoints were nice but again, lack of written material a problem. Should have included published species accounts from CDFG/USFWS with at least black and white drawings or photos.

Presentations were good but written material was very disappointing. I am not walking away from this workshop with very much useful updated information.

TWS-WS Response:

Most of you gave this question a "4" rating even though there weren't enough written materials available. We agree that we had some excellent speakers and hope that they will continue to be a part of our workshops.

How would you rate the guest-room prices at the hotel? (5 = High, 1 = Low) (3 responded to this question)

Scores: 5=0, 4=1 (33%), 3=2 (67%), 2=0, 1=0

Comments:

None

TWS-WS Response:

Judging from the "lack of response" on this question, we can presume that most of you did not stay at the hotel. From those who responded, 67% felt the price was average. The hotel provided rooms for us at the government rate of \$84.00 per night, which is pretty good for southern California.

How would you rate the registration fees for the workshop? (5 = Too High, 1 = Too Low) (11 responded to this question).

Scores: 5=5 (46%), 4=4 (36%), 3=2 (18%), 2=0, 1=0

Comments:

Had the written material been more comprehensive, the registration fees would have been justified.

Good price for the course.

I registered under the reduced rate as a scientific aide. Without this rate, I would not have been able to attend.

Great for the student/biotech rate. I think the reception hall/food was wasted on this crowd---low attendance. Could have saved some reg. fee \$\$.

Too high for the information that was taken home. Best overall presenter was Norman Sisk, Arroyo toads. All presenters should follow his format to pass along practical biological information on the species.

For what I paid I expected really good written material. I feel cheated!! I thought I would leave this workshop with good updated information in written form with good updated range maps!! What happened??

Workshop worth about \$80.00.

TWS-WS Response:

Again, some of you felt that fee was too high because of the lack of written materials. Others felt it was about right and appreciated the discounted rate for young professionals. This workshop cost the Western Section about \$17,000 and will be paid for entirely from registration and field trip fees. Regarding the reception with free food, we were extremely disappointed by the low turnout and are considering not having these events at future workshops. We have to arrange these events with the hotel well in advance of the workshop and, based on the number of registrations, expected that at least 60% of the attendees would come to the welcome reception, as has been the case in the past. Unfortunately, only about 25 people (about 18%) showed up! The Western Section paid nearly \$3,000 for the reception. These receptions are not considered to be "in place of" dinner (although there is always plenty of food) but only to provide a forum in which attendees can relax a bit and "network" with other attendees and the speakers. We provide this as a benefit to attendees and as a "thank you" for their continued support of the Western Section. Please consider this when you attend our next workshop. For those of you who didn't attend, you missed some great food and conversation!

Additional Comments:

Sell field guides for amphibians and reptiles; add current status/listings of each sp. on schedule; lots of breaks-thank you!

Please ask the speakers to use font sizes that can be read from the back of the room or make the accompanying handouts a big enough font to read (I'm in my 20s so it's not my eyes!).

Dislike: Class/workshop went a little long into the evening. Fifteen-minute breaks are adequate and maybe starting at 8:00 a.m. would have helped that. PowerPoint presentations without note lines. Like: EVERYTHING ELSE!

I am really looking forward to the field trip.

TWS-WS Response:

Thank you for suggesting the field guides, status/listings on species, etc. These would be valuable for attendees and we will consider them for our next workshop. Regarding the font sizes: again, there were plenty of open seats at the front of the workshop both days. Regarding the timing: the workshop ran to about 5:30-6:00 p.m. because people were interested in a question-and-answer session. We don't believe that this is too long or "late in the evening". In addition, we had planned to begin the second day at 8:00 a.m.; however, there was a speaker cancellation (again, at the last minute) for the 8:00 a.m. slot and we could not "bump" the rest of the talks to an earlier timeframe.

We were extremely disappointed in the amount of "no-shows" for our field trips. We had many who

were on a waiting list for one of the trips that was full and we had to turn people away who wanted to register onsite to attend one of the field trips. We also had to rent vans (at a cost of about \$1,000) to transport attendees and ended up not using some that we rented-for which we still had to pay. Even though the field trip information and lists were at the registration desk and people were asked to check their names, sign in, etc., we had only about 50% show up for some of the trips! In addition, some of the field-trip leaders did not attend the workshop; they gave up their Saturday morning just to volunteer to lead the field trips. We understand that last-minute things can come up to prevent you from attending, but please consider our costs and volunteers when you attend our next workshop that includes a field trip and please try to let us know in advance if you have to cancel. We appreciate those who came by the registration desk to tell us that they could not make the field trip; it opened up a spot for someone else on the waiting list. A special "thank you" to those who volunteered to drive one of the field-trip vans! We hope the "free lunch" at least somewhat compensated you for your trouble.

I would like to suggest the following topics for workshops/conferences:

Small-mammal identification and ecology of southern CA.

Interspecific relationships/biodiversity in southwest.

Survey protocols.

TWS-WS Response:

Thank you for your suggestions. We will consider them as workshop topics. Also, we are always looking for volunteers to help coordinate these workshops and other events. Those on our Board of Directors and the Professional Development Committee volunteer their time to serve on the board and, especially those on the Professional Development Committee, spend hundreds of volunteer hours to put these events together. Anyone interested in helping, please contact us.

Thanks to all of you who took the time to fill out these evaluation forms and thank you for your continued support of the Western Section!